

Andrew Martin Fischer: The Disempowered Development of Tibet in China. A Study in the Economics of Marginalization

Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014. 425 S., 36,95 EUR (paperback)

Adrian Zenz: 'Tibetanness' Under Threat? Neo-Integrationism, Minority Education and Career Strategies in Qinghai, P.R. China

Leiden: Brill, 2014. 341 S., 105,00 EUR (hardback)

Tibet — Challenges of Development and Identity

The two books under review here are written from different academic angles, but complement one another perfectly. Fischer presents an analysis of trends in Tibetan areas within the P. R. China regarding population, urbanization, economy and employment over the past three decades. Although the limited data availability determines his focus on the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), he is careful to draw comparisons with other provinces in western China. His main approach is derived from structuralist development economics, but he combines quantitative secondary data analysis with qualitative insights from his own fieldwork throughout the Tibetan inhabited areas from 2003 to 2005. His key argument is that economic integration of Tibet has brought 'disempowered development' which increases subordination and marginalization of Tibetans across all social strata in spite — or rather because of — aggregate growth. While 'modern development' has been initialized since the 1950s under PRC rule, it came at a heavy cost. Fischer acknowledges that living standards have been rising across the board, but also points the 'lost decade' from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s when the TAR was stuck in recession, and that its rural incomes were stagnant in real terms from 1992 to 2003. Against conventional

wisdom Fischer demonstrates that claims of a 'demographic invasion' by Han immigrants into the TAR are unsubstantiated. Nonetheless, he argues that urban exclusionary dynamics are severe. While Tibet catches up with national trends of rapid urbanization, urbanizing rural Tibetans are forced to compete with better placed (Han) immigrants — thus laying the foundation of future social and ethnic stratification. Rapid GDP growth since the late 1990s came at the cost of extreme dependency on the central government characterized by absurdly high levels of state subsidies and investments in the TAR. Employment data underline the increasing dominance of public sector jobs in urban Tibet. Rising intra-urban inequality has disproportionately affected Tibetans whose representation in the highest earning public sector has declined. Fischer's most thought-provoking argument is that exclusion works through different mechanisms at both the lower and higher ends of the labor hierarchy in urban Tibet. At the lower end, rural Tibetans can actually live quite well on 'subsistence agriculture'. Thus, their relatively high wage expectations are undercut by (mostly Han) migrants, excluding them from the urban labor market. At the higher end, even the most educated TAR urban residents are on average less educated (and less proficient in written and spoken Chinese) than the rural-to-urban (Han) migrants with whom they have to compete for positions. Moreover, despite the deluge of state subsidies, the TAR educational sector is still underfunded and underprovided (especially on secondary and tertiary levels), causing the gap to widen further. Beyond the statistical analysis, Fischer discusses a Tibetan boycott movement against Muslim businesses in Amdo in 2003 and expanding religious networks between Tibetan monasteries and Han Chinese. Fischer interprets both phenomena as 'protective impulses' against the socioeconomic dislocations analyzed before. Reflecting the political consequences of his work, Fischer concludes that the growth model imposed by the Chinese government

leads to marginalization and disempowerment across Tibetan social strata, in particular alienating those who have invested in integration by opting for Chinese-language education but fail to be rewarded with well-paid jobs. In contrast to current policy trends, he recommends expanding use of Tibetan in education and administration (in essence, living up to what is legally prescribed) to level the playing field of the labor market which is presently heavily tilted against Tibetans due to the emphasis given to fluency and literacy in Chinese.

This employment–education nexus is also at the heart of Adrian Zenz's anthropological study situated in Qinghai, the province with the second largest Tibetan population after the TAR. Based on fieldwork conducted between 2006 and 2008 this book argues that a significant 'tibetanisation' of education has taken place in Qinghai. Zenz highlights the efforts of Qinghai Tibetan educators to expand secondary and tertiary Tibetan-medium education to stave off the perceived threats to 'cultural survival' in view of current assimilatory pressures. In his view, these pressures emanate not just from recent policy trends favoring Chinese-medium education for minorities (which sparked a high-profile protest in Qinghai in 2010), but even more so from marketization. Zenz first scrutinizes published data on education, economy and employment trends in this province, demonstrating, among other things, how Tibetan areas are consistently behind provincial averages, though the situation is far from uniform. In particular, he points at a lack of positions for Tibetan teachers, although there is both supply of qualified candidates and demand because of expanding secondary Tibetan-medium schooling. Before the late 1990s, minority-language schooling was actually quite limited. But since then a 'tibetanisation' of secondary and even tertiary education has taken place, with new, Tibetan-medium college degrees (including in sciences) being offered. Besides pure Chinese- and mixed-medium educations, a pure Tibetan educa-

tion from primary through tertiary levels has now become an option. However, the litmus test for educational strategies is graduates' employability, and in this respect each pathway runs into different troubles. In a nutshell, studying in one's mother tongue provides better chances of educational success, but offers only narrow career choice (primarily in the public sector, especially the protected 'niche' of Tibetan language teaching). On the other hand, pragmatists selecting Chinese-medium education find that their wider career opportunities come with heightened competition, since they have to compete with Han graduates. And both groups are affected by broader trends of labor informalization and corrupt hiring practices. However, Zenz is careful to point out that career success is not the graduates' only goal, but that it is balanced with what he terms 'ethnic success': to make a personal contribution to 'cultural survival'. Interestingly, this notion is invoked by both traditionalists (favoring Tibetan-medium education) and pragmatists alike—though they differ markedly with regard to how this contribution is to be realized. In fact, between these groups the very idea of 'Tibetanness' is contested, and (partially) 'sinicized' Tibetans are subjected to intense scrutiny and even discrimination by traditionalists. Zenz skillfully dissects these discourses and the identity politics of 'Tibetanness', highlighting the many inherent contradictions and pitfalls. In a similar vein, he analyzes debates on Tibetan 'modernity' and 'backwardness'. He posits that these state-sponsored discourses are being appropriated by Tibetan elites to open up discursive spaces. In his view, Tibetan elites are themselves on a 'civilizing mission' with respect to the broader Tibetan population. Displacing the contents of state-sponsored discourses, but replicating their patterns, Tibetan elites are thereby paradoxically undermining as well as reinforcing them. While Zenz argues that 'Tibetanness' will undoubtedly change during modernization, he sees possibilities for 'strategic hybridity',

i.e. engagement with the mainstream will not be completely imposed externally, but local agency will also come to play a role.

Both books under review are full of fascinating detail and innovative perspectives. Fischer's is a seminal contribution to the literature on Tibet's development, while Zenz throws new light on minority education, stressing the potential of local agency in one of the most problematic cases. Their findings on the education-employment nexus — though coming from very different disciplinary approaches — are mutually reinforcing in many ways. Interestingly, it is the anthropologist Zenz, steeped in discourse analysis, who seems to take 'the market' at face value as a force driving these employment dynamics, whereas the economist Fischer points out that in Tibet more than anywhere else the economy is so much dominated by the state that economic trends are in fact political artefacts. Both books are essential reading for anyone interested in Tibet's current development.

Björn Alpermann

John F. Copper: Historical Dictionary of Taiwan (Republic of China)

Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015. 383+51 S., 110 EUR (hardcover) / 78 EUR (e-book)

The first edition of this dictionary, which is part of the "Historical Dictionaries of Asia, Oceania, and the Middle East" series edited by Jon Woronoff, was published in 1993, and as vast changes have taken place in Taiwan since then, it is laudable that Professor Copper updates this book regularly. The title might mislead readers into believing that it only covers Taiwan under the Republic of China (ROC), i.e. from 1945 until today, but this is not the case. Both the chronology — ending with December 2013 — and the introduction, each 50 pages long, provide short, but informative accounts on earlier eras (Aborigines, Spanish/Dutch, Koxinga, Qing-China, Japan). At the end of

the volume, there is a list of Presidents, Vice Presidents, and Premiers since 1949 (but not of the Japanese Governor-Generals from 1895 to 1945), selected statistical data (on only two pages) and a very valuable 60-page bibliography. The book does not contain an index.

The dictionary itself consists of more than 600 entries on 266 pages and mostly concentrates on the Republican period, especially its politics. The reader will find short biographies of rulers and politicians, short summaries on institutions, parties and historical events as well as information about cities, islands, indigenous peoples, newspapers, writers and even weapon systems. Moreover, common catchwords and phrases from both political camps are listed, such as "De-Sinification" (p. 110) or "Green Terror" (an extremely unfriendly "term used by the critics of the governance of Chen Shui-bian and the Democratic Progressive Party from 2000 to 2008, depicting it as a dictatorship", p. 143). There are also many cross-references which make the dictionary even more useful.

So even though not excessively long, this book contains an impressive amount of highly helpful information, and since it is also well written, it makes interesting and enjoyable reading for anyone interested in Taiwan. It is especially recommendable for students, journalists, and researchers.

As with all dictionaries, some of its users may miss certain entries which in their view would have been worth including. At least some foreigners of certain significance to Taiwanese history such as the Canadian missionary George Leslie Mackay (1844–1901) or the American diplomat George H. Kerr (1911–1992) can be found in the bibliographical section. Other important persons, however, are missing altogether: Chiang Wei-shui 蔣渭水 (1890?–1941), an important political activist during the Japanese colonial period, is not mentioned at all, in contrast to his contemporary Lin Hsien-t'ang 林獻堂 (p. 181); the influential writer